

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 614

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots
("WASP").

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 17, 2009

Mrs. HUTCHISON (for herself, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Ms. LANDRIEU, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. LINCOLN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. SNOWE, Mrs. BOXER, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. HAGAN, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mrs. McCASKILL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce
Service Pilots ("WASP").

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds that—

5 (1) the Women Airforce Service Pilots of
6 WWII, known as the "WASP", were the first women
7 in history to fly American military aircraft;

1 (2) more than 60 years ago, they flew fighter,
2 bomber, transport, and training aircraft in defense
3 of America's freedom;

4 (3) they faced overwhelming cultural and gen-
5 der bias against women in nontraditional roles and
6 overcame multiple injustices and inequities in order
7 to serve their country;

8 (4) through their actions, the WASP eventually
9 were the catalyst for revolutionary reform in the in-
10 tegration of women pilots into the Armed Services;

11 (5) during the early months of World War II,
12 there was a severe shortage of combat pilots;

13 (6) Jacqueline Cochran, America's leading
14 woman pilot of the time, convinced General Hap Ar-
15 nold, Chief of the Army Air Forces, that women, if
16 given the same training as men, would be equally ca-
17 pable of flying military aircraft and could then take
18 over some of the stateside military flying jobs, there-
19 by releasing hundreds of male pilots for combat
20 duty;

21 (7) the severe loss of male combat pilots made
22 the necessity of utilizing women pilots to help in the
23 war effort clear to General Arnold, and a women's
24 pilot training program was soon approved;

1 (8) it was not until August 1943, that the
2 women aviators would receive their official name;

3 (9) General Arnold ordered that all women pi-
4 lots flying military aircraft, including 28 civilian
5 women ferry pilots, would be named “WASP”,
6 Women Airforce Service Pilots;

7 (10) more than 25,000 American women ap-
8 plied for training, but only 1,830 were accepted and
9 took the oath;

10 (11) exactly 1,074 of those trainees successfully
11 completed the 21 to 27 weeks of Army Air Force
12 flight training, graduated, and received their Army
13 Air Force orders to report to their assigned air base;

14 (12) on November 16, 1942, the first class of
15 29 women pilots reported to the Houston, Texas
16 Municipal Airport and began the same military
17 flight training as the male Army Air Force cadets
18 were taking;

19 (13) due to a lack of adequate facilities at the
20 airport, 3 months later the training program was
21 moved to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas;

22 (14) WASP were eventually stationed at 120
23 Army air bases all across America;

24 (15) they flew more than 60,000,000 miles for
25 their country in every type of aircraft and on every

1 type of assignment flown by the male Army Air
2 Force pilots, except combat;

3 (16) WASP assignments included test piloting,
4 instructor piloting, towing targets for air-to-air gun-
5 nery practice, ground-to-air anti-aircraft practice,
6 ferrying, transporting personnel and cargo (includ-
7 ing parts for the atomic bomb), simulated strafing,
8 smoke laying, night tracking, and flying drones;

9 (17) in October 1943, male pilots were refusing
10 to fly the B-26 Martin Marauder (known as the
11 “Widowmaker”) because of its fatality records, and
12 General Arnold ordered WASP Director, Jacqueline
13 Cochran, to select 25 WASP to be trained to fly the
14 B-26 to prove to the male pilots that it was safe to
15 fly;

16 (18) during the existence of the WASP—

17 (A) 38 women lost their lives while serving
18 their country;

19 (B) their bodies were sent home in poorly
20 crafted pine boxes;

21 (C) their burial was at the expense of their
22 families or classmates;

23 (D) there were no gold stars allowed in
24 their parents’ windows; and

1 (E) because they were not considered mili-
2 tary, no American flags were allowed on their
3 coffins;

4 (19) in 1944, General Arnold made a personal
5 request to Congress to militarize the WASP, and it
6 was denied;

7 (20) on December 7, 1944, in a speech to the
8 last graduating class of WASP, General Arnold said,
9 “You and more than 900 of your sisters have shown
10 you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers. I
11 salute you . . . We of the Army Air Force are proud
12 of you. We will never forget our debt to you.”;

13 (21) with victory in WWII almost certain, on
14 December 20, 1944, the WASP were quietly and
15 unceremoniously disbanded;

16 (22) there were no honors, no benefits, and very
17 few “thank you’s”;

18 (23) just as they had paid their own way to
19 enter training, they had to pay their own way back
20 home after their honorable service to the military;

21 (24) the WASP military records were imme-
22 diately sealed, stamped “classified” or “secret”, and
23 filed away in Government archives, unavailable to
24 the historians who wrote the history of WWII or the
25 scholars who compiled the history text books used

1 today, with many of the records not declassified
2 until the 1980s;

3 (25) consequently, the WASP story is a missing
4 chapter in the history of the Air Force, the history
5 of aviation, and the history of the United States of
6 America;

7 (26) in 1977, 33 years after the WASP were
8 disbanded, the Congress finally voted to give the
9 WASP the veteran status they had earned, but these
10 heroic pilots were not invited to the signing cere-
11 mony at the White House, and it was not until 7
12 years later that their medals were delivered in the
13 mail in plain brown envelopes;

14 (27) in the late 1970s, more than 30 years
15 after the WASP flew in World War II, women were
16 finally permitted to attend military pilot training in
17 the United States Armed Forces;

18 (28) thousands of women aviators flying sup-
19 port aircraft have benefitted from the service of the
20 WASP and followed in their footsteps;

21 (29) in 1993, the WASP were once again ref-
22 erenced during congressional hearings regarding the
23 contributions that women could make to the mili-
24 tary, which eventually led to women being able to fly

1 military fighter, bomber, and attack aircraft in com-
2 bat;

3 (30) hundreds of United States servicewomen
4 combat pilots have seized the opportunity to fly
5 fighter aircraft in recent conflicts, all thanks to the
6 pioneering steps taken by the WASP;

7 (31) the WASP have maintained a tight-knit
8 community, forged by the common experiences of
9 serving their country during war;

10 (32) as part of their desire to educate America
11 on the WASP history, WASP have assisted “Wings
12 Across America”, an organization dedicated to edu-
13 cating the American public, with much effort aimed
14 at children, about the remarkable accomplishments
15 of these WWII veterans; and

16 (33) the WASP have been honored with exhibits
17 at numerous museums, to include—

18 (A) the Smithsonian Institution, Wash-
19 ington, DC;

20 (B) the Women in Military Service to
21 America Memorial at Arlington National Ceme-
22 tery, Arlington, Virginia;

23 (C) the National Museum of the United
24 States Air Force, Wright Patterson Air Force
25 Base, Ohio;

1 (D) the National WASP WWII Museum,
2 Sweetwater, Texas;

3 (E) the 8th Air Force Museum, Savannah,
4 Georgia;

5 (F) the Lone Star Flight Museum, Gal-
6 veston, Texas;

7 (G) the American Airpower Museum,
8 Farmingdale, New York;

9 (H) the Pima Air Museum, Tucson, Ari-
10 zona;

11 (I) the Seattle Museum of Flight, Seattle,
12 Washington;

13 (J) the March Air Museum, March Reserve
14 Air Base, California; and

15 (K) the Texas State History Museum,
16 Austin, Texas.

17 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President pro tem-
19 pore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Rep-
20 resentatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the
21 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
22 of appropriate design in honor of the Women Airforce
23 Service Pilots (WASP) collectively, in recognition of their
24 pioneering military service and exemplary record, which

1 forged revolutionary reform in the Armed Forces of the
2 United States of America.

3 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
4 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
5 Treasury shall strike the gold medal with suitable em-
6 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
7 Secretary.

8 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
10 gold medal in honor of the Women Airforce Service
11 Pilots, the gold medal shall be given to the Smithso-
12 nian Institution, where it will be displayed as appro-
13 priate and made available for research.

14 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense
15 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
16 shall make the gold medal received under this Act
17 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
18 locations associated with the WASP.

19 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

20 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
21 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
22 bronze of the gold medal struck under this Act, at a price
23 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
24 materials, dyes, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

2 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-
3 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
4 Code.

5 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; PROCEEDS**
6 **OF SALE.**

7 (a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
8 authorized to be charged against the United States Mint
9 Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$30,000
10 to pay for the cost of the medal authorized under section
11 2.

12 (b) PROCEEDS OF SALE.—Amounts received from the
13 sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be
14 deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise
15 Fund.

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